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ABSTRACT

The roots of conflict in the Middle East are deep and tangled. How can teachers of history, philosophy, or literature help their students reach even a simple understanding of the history and continued impact of these conflicts? In this curriculum project, a high school literature teacher has chosen five poets (two Egyptian, two Israeli, and one Palestinian) with distinct perspectives, hoping that students, in exploring these lyrics, will discover a wide variation of emotions and surprising similarities among opposing forces. The poets are Amal Dunqul (Egypt), Yehuda Amichai (Israel), Dalia Ravikovich (Israel), Mahmoud Darwish (Palestine), and Tawfiq Zayyad (Egypt). The unit groups the selected poems thematically and provides a brief biography for each poet. The unit includes only a significant passage (usually a few lines) from the selected poem; however, references are cited from which the entire poems can be accessed. Each selected is briefly explicated. (BT)

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Poetry of Conflict: Egypt, Israel and Palestine

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Diana L. Rahm

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Fulbright-Hays Seminar
Egypt and Israel: Between Tradition and Modernity
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Foreword

Brocade upholstery coddles me
as the TV flickers images of bombings across the ocean.
I grip the fabric in a fear I cannot fully comprehend
because I'm untouched
—feeling not the rifts of family
that killed my ancestors with grapeshot and fallen horses
—immune from the horror
that gave my great-uncle enemy binoculars and stories he refuses to speak
—innocent of burning villages
and students dead from freedom of expression.
Time, economics, geography and gender filter such impurities.
Within this womb I cannot hate,
but being human
I still can cry.

The poem above is mine, written in response to an overseas horror I viewed on the television in my living room six years ago. As an American civilian, I am not alone in my lack of full understanding of the experiences of war, particularly what it is to be in a land that is under siege. If I, as an adult, cannot comprehend these experiences, the young people in my classroom are even further removed from this understanding. Yet, as citizens of the world, it is imperative that we all have familiarity with the depth of feelings that cause and are the result of armed conflict.

When my Fulbright group was in Jerusalem in late July and early August 2000, Yasir Arafat and Ehud Barak met at Camp David to discuss the peaceful establishment of the nation of Palestine. The world watched hopefully. In the three months since our departure, violence again has erupted between Israelis and Palestinians. As of this writing, nearly 150 people have been killed. The Egyptian government, which has existed in a "cold peace" with Israel for many years, has aided in resolution by holding talks in the Sinai. So far, peace remains elusive and the death toll rises.

The roots of the conflict in the Middle East are deep and tangled. How are we, as teachers of history, philosophy or literature, to help our students reach even a simple understanding of the history and continued impact of these conflicts? One avenue is to tap into the personal experiences and emotions of those involved. Thus, as a high school literature teacher, I have chosen five voices representing differing perspectives: one Egyptian, two Israelis and two Palestinians. In exploring these few lyrics, students will discover a wide variation of emotions and often surprising similarities between opposing forces. It is wise to remember that while each of these poets is widely respected in his or her own nation, these few poems cannot speak for every Egyptian, Israeli or Palestinian.

Diana L. Rahm
Columbia, Missouri
29 October 2000

Uses for Poetry

For each of the poets, I have supplied a brief biography as well as a short passage followed by a summary for each poem. Teachers may use the resources listed in the back to access the poems in entirety and to design their own lessons utilizing any or all of these poems. Below are a few suggestions for grouping the poems:

comparison of personal Egyptian/Israeli reactions to loss of family at the Suez Canal
"Corner" by Amal Dunqul
"Lament for the Fallen in War" by Yehuda Amichai

impact of war on women
"Corner" by Amal Dunqul
"You Can't Kill a Baby Twice" by Dahlia Ravikovitch
"Hovering at a Low Altitude" by Dahlia Ravikovitch

parallels between Islam and Judaism
"Corner" by Amal Dunqul
"An Arab Shepherd Is Searching for His Goat on Mount Zion" by Yehuda Amichai

parallels between opposing sides' reactions to war
"Jerusalem" by Yehuda Amichai
"Blood Heifer" by Dahlia Ravikovitch

use of nature imagery to portray hope and resistance
"The Scaffold" by Amal Dunqul
"Huleikat – The Third Poem About Dicky" by Yehuda Amichai
"Passing Remark" by Tawfiq Zayyad
"Before Their Tanks" by Tawfiq Zayyad
"Here We Will Stay" by Tawfiqu Zayyad

monster/dehumanizing imagery to portray the opposition
"Tomorrow" by Amal Dunqul
"Identity Card" by Mahmoud Darwish
"Here We Will Stay" by Tawfiq Zayyad

detached observers
"Corner" by Amal Dunqul
"Blood Heifer" by Dahlia Ravikovitch
"Hovering at a Low Altitude" by Dahlia Ravikovitch

hope
"Huleikat – The Third Poem About Dicky" by Yehuda Amichai
"Concerning Hopes" by Mahmoud Darwish

Poetry of Amal Dunqul

Amal Dunqul was born in Upper Egypt in 1940. He eventually moved to Cairo where he became one of the most important Egyptian poets during the 1960s. The 1967 publication of his poem entitled "Crying in the Hands of Zarkaa El-Yamana" was a watershed for Dunqul's literary reputation. This poem, a response to the Egyptian defeat in the June 1967 War, is just one example of Dunqul's poetic reaction to Egypt's political issues. In particular, Dunqul opposed Anwar Sadat's negotiations with the Israelis at the apparent cost of close relations with other Arab countries.

Amal Dunqul never finished his formal schooling and lived a life of relative poverty. He never had a permanent home and became known as "the vagabond poet." Despite his informal background and lifestyle, his poetry is a strong statement which made him widely respected. He won many prizes including one from the Egyptian Supreme Board for Literature and Arts in 1962. When Dunqul died of cancer in 1983, he left behind six collections of poetry.

"**Corner**"
translated by Sharif Elmusa and Thomas G. Ezzy

Significant Passage, lines 1-4:

He sits in the corner,
writes, as the naked woman
mingles with the nightclub's patrons,
auctions off her beauty.

These first lines of "Corner" establish the two characters of the poem: a removed observer and a working woman who is completely exposed both physically and emotionally due to action at the Suez Canal which has taken her brother, forcing her to work to earn a living. Throughout the two stanzas of this poem, the observer sits in the corner and offers her advice, the type of advice that outside observers might offer when they are not personally touched by war and loss. The observer tells her not to worry because the "our country's enemy / is just like us." Somehow she is to find comfort not only in the Muslim and Jewish similarities of circumcision and eschewal of pork but also in the more dubious human similarities of desire for "foreign imports" and "guns and hookers." Spiritually and materially, morally and degenerately, the two sides of the conflict appear to be the same. Regardless of the similarities, the naked woman cries. Similarities will not spare her and her family from physical or emotional rape by "the enemy."

The observer represents the philosophical response to war while the naked woman actually feels the conflict. She will never be the same. Although she holds on to the belief that she will regain her modesty when her brother returns, the poet adds parenthetically that "the land / returns, her brother doesn't." There is no full healing from the destruction of individuals and families that have been torn apart by war. She shares her brother's picture with his children and she cries. Ultimately, she knows that the future represented by his children will never return to the normalcy they have known prior to the conflict. Her continued tears are her inward hopelessness as a result of her losses. It matters not what removed observers say about the conflict; those who are touched by it lose families, stability of lifestyle, and human dignity.

"The Scaffold"
translated by Sharif Elmusa and Thomas G. Ezzy

Significant Passage, lines 7-9:

You are beyond me now.
Are you my child
or my widowed mother?

The blindfolded narrator of "The Scaffold," obviously awaiting execution, addresses a loved-one who represents the past transgressions against Egypt ("my widowed mother") and the future of Egypt ("my child"). In order to approach the scaffold, the visitor must come through a row of soldiers representing the "authorities" who have blindfolded the narrator, taken his liberty and will soon take his life. The visitor is already "beyond" the narrator because they are in two separate worlds: the world of the free and living versus the world of the condemned, confined and thus, for all practical purposes, the world of the dead.

In a parenthetical aside, the narrator remarks that although he was promised his freedom after a fair trial that someone has added information to his written statements that have condemned him. "The authorities" who have made fair promises have actually lied and betrayed him. This aside sets up the dichotomy of truth and openness versus lies and betrayal. There is an "us" versus "them" thread throughout the poem although neither side is ever specifically defined beyond those who are persecuted and those who are the persecutors.

After the first stanza sets the scene and provides background, the narrator continues to address his "grieving child" in a prophetic manner using apocalyptic allusions and furthering his previous commentary about the false appearances of "the authorities" by remarking that "in its nest the dove is perched upon a bomb." As the child goes forth into the future, the narrator cautions a dark wariness. He refers to the child as a "sheaf of wheat" and "next year's flower," fertile, living images promising goodness and prosperity against the prospect of death and destruction presented by "the authorities."

Vision and blindness are recurring images. In the final stanza, the narrator warns the child to remain strong and to let the vision of his execution remain a clear picture to bring strength for the future. The narrator admonishes the child to look at the execution scene fearlessly because fear can block not only the image but future action. The narrator says that already there "too many iron mantles" between them, not only physically as the narrator readies for execution but also politically through outside forces that oppose them. Ultimately, the narrator's message is that he is to be a symbol for the betrayal by "the enemy" and a prophet for the future action of his compatriots.

"**Tomorrow**"
translated by Sharif Elmusa and Thomas G. Ezzy

Significant Passage, lines 2-3:

Now they are carving up your children
on their platters;

Of the three poems, this is the shortest and most pointed in its angry tone. Throughout the fourteen lines, the poet speaks to an unnamed victim, predicting a dark future similar to that predicted by the speaker in "The Scaffold." The future holds destruction of children, homes, prosperity and even Egypt's "ancient cities." Everything that Egypt is and has been will be destroyed. Dunqul sets up a dichotomy between "us" and "them." The people of Egypt (us) are prosperous and friendly. Their homes are warm "nests." The enemy (them) is ruthless and inhuman. They will carve up and devour children. They will set fire to Egyptian homes and reduce the dignity of Egyptian heritage to "cities of tents." Even after murder, the enemy is not satisfied but will "dig for treasures" inside the innocent victims. The dark prophet of this poem pointedly predicts destruction of all aspects of Egypt: past (ancient cities), present (the hearer of the poem) and future (children).

Poetry of Yehuda Amichai

Yehuda Amichai was born into an Orthodox Jewish family in Wurzburg, Germany, in 1924. His family emigrated to Palestine in 1936 where they settled in Jerusalem. Amichai lived there until his death on September 22, 2000. During World War II, Amichai served in the British army. He also fought in Arab-Israeli wars in 1948, 1956 and 1973. Because he desired peace and reconciliation between Israelis and Palestinians, Amichai helped found Peace Now, an organization supporting the peace process.

Amichai's poetry reflects the complexities of his various experiences with war and oppression. According the translator Chana Bloch, "Amichai's poetry is not standard government issue. It isn't patriotic in the ordinary sense of the word, it doesn't cry death to the enemy, and it offers no simple consolation for killing and dying." He is not only considered one of the most popular and influential poets in Israel but his poetry has also been translated into thirty-seven languages. Amichai wrote eleven books of poetry as well as novels, short stories, plays and children's books. He won the Israel Prize in 1982. In 1994 when Yitzhak Rabin, Shimon Peres and Yasir Arafat received the Nobel Peace Prize, Rabin read Amichai's "God Has Pity on Kindergarten Children" and Amichai himself read his poem, "Wildpeace."

"Jerusalem"
translated by Stephen Mitchell

Significant Passage, lines 12-13:

We have put up many flags,
they have put up many flags.

This poem describes the closeness of people's lives in the Old City of Jerusalem where both "sides" are mingled in daily life. He uses hanging laundry as a symbol for the division and togetherness that is part of every day life. All people are united by daily existence requiring nonthreatening paraphernalia to take care of physical needs. In the first stanza, Amichai observes drying laundry, a sheet and a towel, each belonging to "my enemy." The flapping whiteness symbolizes purity and peace even as it serves as a "flag" of happiness. The structure of this first stanza is tight and crowded like the adult life in the Old City.

The structure of the second stanza is lighter and spread out. It describes a kite flying over the walls of the Old City controlled by a child that is obstructed from view. The poet makes no observation as to whether the child is "enemy" or friendly. The childish activity of flying a kite is a symbol of freedom and innocence, not connected with factions because the kite is not confined in the walls of the city. Unlike the adults in the first and third stanzas, the kite can see the entire picture and escape the confines adults have established in Jerusalem.

The third stanza returns to the factionalism begun in the first stanza. Both sides have put up "many flags," an outward sign trying to convince "the enemy" that each side is happy. Clearly neither side is happy but both are caught up in psychological games with the other. Amichai implies that the loss of the childhood innocence and freedom is at the heart of the matter. Perhaps only by escaping the walls that adults have built, not only the walls of the city but also the walls of their hearts, can the people of Jerusalem reach mutual respect and understanding and thus happiness.

"An Arab Shepherd Is Searching for His Goat on Mount Zion"
translated by Chana Bloch

Significant Passage, lines 13-15:

Searching for a goat or a son
has always been the beginning
of a new religion in these mountains.

Amichai brings together Judaism and Islam in this somewhat whimsical poem about a lost goat and a lost child. Although they are on "opposite" mountains, both the Jewish father speaking in the poem and an Arab shepherd he observes are searching for their lost charges. Both are supposed to be protecting and raising an innocent charge who has slipped away from them. Both are care-givers; both are shepherds "in temporary failure."

Their voices meet "above the Sultan's Pool," a 16th century public fountain which is also now an amphitheater. It is a place of gathering fitting for the mingling of two seemingly opposing voices both occupied in search for lost young. Amichai's remark that neither wants "to get caught in the wheels / of the terrible *Had Gadya* machine" is a reference to "Only One Kid," a popular song sung in Aramaic at the end of the Passover seder. The song, used to entertain children, is a cumulative pattern of events somewhat similar to the events in the popular American children's song "I Know an Old Lady Who Swallowed a Fly." Getting caught up in the "*Had Gadya* machine" means becoming inextricably entangled in events of which one has no control. Thus, when the goat and the child are found in the bushes, each adult celebrates his relief and delight by "laughing and crying" but their voices now are not mixing in the air of Jerusalem; they are "back inside." Their shared panic becomes private relief.

The *Had Gadya* allusion also sets up the final stanza (cited above) recognizing the closeness of the Judaism and Islam. Both religions share Abraham as a patriarch. The sacrifice of the son (Isaac in Judaism or Ishmael in Islam) is a pivotal event. In both cases, the son is saved at the last moment by a ram caught in a thicket. Both Judaism and Islam revere the spot on Mount Moriah where the sacrifice was to take place. On the rock of sacrifice, the Temple was built and it is where the Dome of the Rock stands today. Through his imagery, Amichai hints at the irony that two groups of people who seem to be so far removed from each other actually have so much in common.

"Lament for the Fallen in War"
translated by Yehuda Amichai and Ted Hughes

Significant Passage, lines 6-7:

He has become very thin; has lost
his son's weight.

The eleven lines of this poem describe Mr. Beringer, a friend of the poet, whose son was killed near the Suez Canal. In his grief, Mr. Beringer is physically wasting away. As he observes Mr. Beringer, the poet is deeply touched by his pain.

Deeper meaning is provided by the metaphor of a ship passing through the Suez Canal. Just as the Canal is a passageway from one waterway to another "dug by strangers," so has Mr. Beringer's life become a passageway "dug by strangers," the unknown people responsible for his son's death. Like a ship, Mr. Beringer is now "floating lightly / through the alleys." Although he has physically lost "his son's weight," he carries the heavy cargo of grief which makes his present life as barren as a desert paralleling the heavy ships on the Suez Canal that physically "pass through the desert." He passes the poet at the Jaffa gate, another symbol of passageway from one way of life to another as it is one of the entries between modern Jerusalem and the Old City.

Mr. Beringer's life is no longer productive nor under his own control because of his son's death. He is "like driftwood." The poet shares his helplessness in controlling emotion due to loss. Mr. Beringer becomes "entangled in my [the poet's] heart." Mr. Beringer and the poet serve as just one example of how war casualties not only affect immediate family members but also the wider community.

"Huleikat – The Third Poem About Dicky"
translated by Benjamin Harshav and Barbara Harshav

Significant Passage, lines 18-20:

And do not forget,
Even a fist
Was once an open palm and fingers.

Passage of time and fading memory are the primary issues of this poem in which Amichai evokes the memory of a friend who fell at Huleikat, a battle in the Negev during the War for Independence. Huleikat, later called Sde Heletz, is also the site of the first discovery of oil in Israel. In the first stanza the poet states that forty years have passed since "Dicky fell" at Huleikat. In those forty years, Dicky has remained static while the poet has aged. In that time span, their roles have changed. In their youth, Dicky was the elder by four years who comforted the poet "in times of trouble and distress." Now the poet remembers his friend "like a young son, and I am his father, old and grieving."

Throughout the poem, Amichai admonishes his audience to maintain full memories, not only of unpleasantness but also of beauty. He uses the word "remember" in three of the four stanzas, the word "remind" twice in the last stanza and he commands "do not forget" in the second and the fourth stanzas. Just as he is able to remember the youth and kindness of Dicky in addition to Dicky's destruction, he warns the reader to maintain an understanding that difficulties in life are also part of kindness and fruitfulness. "Terrible battles" are parallel to the ordinary life of gardens and "children playing." Time causes aging and "fallen fruit" but death and decay are also part of the "leaves and branches" of life. Each negative image is bound inextricably with a positive image leading to the final admonition: "And do not forget, / Even a fist / Was once an open palm and fingers." By remembering the open, giving hand, Amichai's audience can look beyond the anger represented by the fist.

Poetry of Dahlia Ravikovitch

Dahlia Ravikovitch was born in Ramat Gan, a suburb of Tel Aviv, in 1936. She studied at Hebrew University in Jerusalem. Her first book of poetry, *The Love of an Orange*, published in 1959 when she was 23 established her as a major voice in Israeli poetry.

Ravikovitch's early poetry is characterized by tight structure and a sense of the fantastic in exploring women's roles in Israeli society. By her third volume of poetry, Ravikovitch adopted a free verse style and a grimmer realism. The three poems included here are from *Real Love* published in 1986. These three poems reflect her concern with Israeli politics, particularly after the June 1982 invasion of Lebanon which many Israelis viewed as unnecessary. Because of their voice of protest, these poems have caused some controversy in Israel.

Today Dahlia Ravikovitch is an award-winning, influential poet. She resides in Tel Aviv.

"Blood Heifer"
translated by Chana Bloch and Ariel Bloch

Significant Passage, lines 7-10:

Ten steps
and he's not a Jew anymore,
not an Arab –
in limbo.

"Blood Heifer" responds to an actual event which occurred in a Hebron marketplace. A young yeshiva student was shot but no one tried to help him because observers were unsure as to whether he was an Arab or a Jew. The title refers to a passage from Deuteronomy (21:1-9) that calls for a sacrifice of a heifer for a community to atone for a murder in which no one knows who is responsible.

Ravikovitch's tone is matter-of-fact. She reports the facts as well as the flight and fight reactions of the on-lookers. Some shout and others rush to take revenge although no one is certain of what the situation actually is.

By dying, the yeshiva student has become a mere shell and it no longer matters whether he is Arab or Jew. Death strips all of individual personalities.

The final stanza refers to the "blood heifer" sacrifice. She places responsibility for further action on the community while her last line makes the murdered man a part of the greater world through the suggestion of "scattering its [the heifer's] ashes in the river."

"You Can't Kill a Baby Twice"
translated by Chana Bloch and Ariel Bloch

Significant Passage, lines 22-26:

And the children already lying in puddles of filth,
their mouths gaping,
at peace.
No one will harm them.
You can't kill a baby twice.

This poem is a reprimand of Lebanese Christian forces who massacred 800 Palestinians in the villages of Sabra and Shatilla refugee camps in Lebanon in 1982. Israeli citizens criticized the failure of the Israeli government to intervene and during the controversy Prime Minister Menachem Begin resigned.

Ravikovitch utilizes a dark ironic tone to describe the horrors of this massacre with the juxtaposition of positive imagery such as the statement in the passage above that the babies are "at peace" because they are dead in their "puddles of filth." The first stanza nearly congratulates the soldiers for taking so many people from life to "the world / of eternal light." Light imagery continues throughout the poem as the juxtaposition of the thin light of the moon with the bright searchlights of the soldiers.

The irony builds to the last stanza where Ravikovitch refers to "our sweet soldiers" who are so selfless that all they ask for is to return home safely. This reference to soldiers desiring only a safe return is an allusion to a song about a war hero that was popular in 1967 but which is now often used ironically to illustrate shallow responses of returning soldiers returning after their engagement in human atrocities. Ravikovitch's observation regarding the soldier's desire for a safe return home provides a stark contrast to the refugees who do not even have a home and who are slaughtered as they scream in "sewage puddles" and "filth" in refugee camps.

"Hovering at a Low Altitude"
translated by Chana Bloch and Ariel Bloch

Significant Passage, lines 21-26:

I am not here.
I've been in the mountain many days now.
The light will not burn me, the frost
won't touch me
Why be astonished now?
I've seen worse things in my life.

"Hovering at a Low Altitude" juxtaposes the detachment of an observer with the inescapable tableau of an Arab shepherdess on the day in which she will be raped and murdered. According to Robert Alter in his Foreward to Ravikovitch's *The Window: New and Selected Poems*, "The image of low-altitude hovering over an atrocity is an obvious but nonetheless effective emblem of the situation of the ordinary Israeli, knowing but choosing not to see certain terrible acts perpetrated by other Israelis, or even in the name of the nation; more generally, it is a parable of the moral untenability of the detached observation in any political realm."

Throughout the poem, the narrator states "I am not here" four times as if to convince herself of her inability to take action and her emotional distance from what she knows will occur. The narrator is intimate with the setting and the daily life of the shepherd girl. The landscape and the weather are described fully but the narrator is untouched as in lines 23-24 in the section above. With the same detached voice, the narrator describes the shepherd girl and her inability to escape what will happen.

In the final stanza, the narrator's preoccupation with her own desire for distance reaches its final stage of denial at the very moment that the rapist's hands close over the shepherdess' hair. The narrator reflects: "I can get away and say to myself: / I haven't seen a thing." Yet, like the rapist who commits his atrocity "without a shred of pity," the narrator who observes without acting is implicated in the violence.

Poetry of Mahmoud Darwish

Mahmoud Darwish was born in 1942 in a village east of Acre in Palestine. In 1948 when the village was destroyed, he and his family became refugees in Lebanon. They were denied identity papers upon their return because they arrived too late to be included in the census of Palestinian Arabs. Lack of identification lead to harassment of Darwish which included several instances of his imprisonment. In 1971 Darwish left Israel. He lived as an exile from his homeland in Cairo, Beirut and Paris. In 1996 he was allowed to return to Israel and now lives in the village of Ramallah on the West Bank.

Darwish's poetry vocalizes the pride, anger and determination of the Palestinian resistance. A testament to the power of his poetry is the controversy that arose in the Knesset in March 2000 over the proposal that five of his poems be included in the Israeli school curriculum under the umbrella of multiculturalism. The squabble led to a no-confidence vote against President Ehud Barak. Although Barak survived the fray, Darwish's poetry did not make inclusion into the curriculum.

Darwish has published more than twelve volumes of poetry.

"Concerning Hopes"
translated by Denys Johnson-Davies

Significant Passage, lines 17-19:

My friend! Our land is no barren land.
Each land is born in due time;
With every dawn, a freedom fighter rises.

"Concerning Hopes" is Darwish's admonition to Palestinians to maintain their focus on the struggle for freedom. In the first stanza, Darwish exhorts his audience not tell him of desires to be productive members of other societies singing in other parts of the world such as Algeria, Yemen, Havana or Aswan. Four times Darwish commands his audience "tell me not" of desires to be singing elsewhere.

The second stanza explains Darwish's reasoning. It is as unlikely that events in Palestine will change by wishing as it is that the great rivers of the world will change their courses. Both rivers and Palestine must follow a natural order of events and the audience for Darwish's poem, like the rivers, must follow their own course. Wishing otherwise will not change reality. The last three lines (see passage above) reassure his reader that there is hope. The land will be produce freedom "in due time."

"Identity Card"
translated by Denys Johnson-Davies

Significant Passage, lines 1-3:

Put it on record.
I am an Arab
And the number of my card is fifty thousand.

"Identity Card" is perhaps Darwish's most famous poem. His first public reading of it at age nineteen caused an immediate sensation among Palestinians. It has become a popular song celebrating Palestinian pride and resistance.

Five of the seven stanzas begin with the imperative "Put it on record. / I am an Arab." It is a statement of defiance in the face of an Israeli authority who requires identification. The word "Arab" appears to irritate the official so that Darwish repeatedly asks "What's there to be angry about?" To further illustrate that he is non-threatening and thus should cause no anger, the speaker of the poem describes his humble situation. He has a large family that is still growing. He works physically hard every day in a quarry to make money for his family. His ironic comment that he does not even "beg for alms at your door" is a bitter attempt to show the official that he tries not to come into contact with the Israelis. In its bitterness, however, the comment also underscores that the Palestinians recognize the economic divide between themselves and the Israelis. The number of his card, "fifty thousand" shows the vastness of the Palestinian people who are in a similar condition. To ask the Israeli authority "What's there to be angry about?" is to twist the situation. Those who feel oppressed are the ones who should be angry.

The middle three stanzas recall the history of the Palestinian people. Their history began "before the birth of time." They are a humble, hardworking people who are unpretentious. They deserve respect. Twice the narrator states that he is "a name without a" title or surname. In his modest surroundings, he remains patient although everything around him is "a whirlpool of anger." His village is "remote, forgotten" and he feels as if his only distinguishing characteristics, at least to the official, are the cord and keffiyeh he wears which serves as an irritant because it is a sign of his heritage.

The line "What's there to be angry about" reverses directions between stanzas five and six. It stands alone and is no longer a rhetorical question aimed at the Israeli official. Now it is an interrogative aimed at the speaker himself. His description of his people has now made him angry. He becomes accusatory of the Israeli official. Not only does he firmly state "You stole my forefathers' vineyards" but he also implies that soon the government will also take the very rocks the Palestinians quarry leaving them absolutely nothing with which to sustain themselves.

The last stanza begins with an exclamatory "So!" His pride and determination has reached a peak and he is proud to have his identity put "on record at the top of page one." Still, he assures the official that despite his conditions he does not "hate people" nor does he "trespass" on other's property, implying that the Israelis do engage in these activities. In his final lines, Darwish refers back to his concerns that have run throughout the poem, that of providing for his family. Because

the Israelis have stolen the fertile land of the Palestinians, they are forced to work with rocks to provide for their families and their future. Despite that he doesn't "hate people," the narrator warns that if he becomes hungry "I will eat the flesh of my usurper." The question running throughout the poem, "What's there to be angry about?" has now been answered. Although the Israeli official has no reason to be angry, the Palestinian under question has great cause. In the final couplet he warns the official: "Beware, beware of my hunger / And of my anger!"

Poetry of Tawfiq Zayyad

Palestinian poet Tawfiq Zayyad was born in 1932. At the age of 43, after he was already an established poet, Zayyad was elected mayor of Nazareth. He served in that position until his death in a car accident in 1994. Among the Arab population of Israel, Zayyad was a popular voice and a powerful Muslim politician. He was known for his determined Arab nationalism as well as his resistance poetry.

The life of Zayyad's poetry attests to the power of the word. His first volume, *Warmly I Shake Your Hands* (1966) remains a touchstone in the struggle for Palestinian existence in Israel. His poetry is an inspiration for holding fast to claims for independence. Some of his poetry has been set to music and those songs still motivate Palestinians struggling for independence.

"Passing Remark"
translated by Sharif Elmusa and Charles Doria

The "passing remark" of this simple six-line poem is a statement from a mulberry bush as "they" run over and destroy it. The bush's comment is the belief that no matter what, no one can crush her "right to bear fruit." The poem is an expression of steadfastness in the face of violence and destruction. The title suggests that this struggle between the beauty and continuity of the mulberry bush and the opposing forces is a common occurrence, something unremarkable. Regenerating forces can be maimed but cannot be destroyed.

"Before Their Tanks"
translated by Sharif Elmusa and Charles Doria

The first eight lines of this ten line poem is a gentle description of the narrator's home. The imagery is of nature and life such as "rose petals" and a grape arbor. The house itself basks in warm sunshine. The picture of life is idyllic and peaceful, full of growth and fruitfulness. The last two lines slam into the halcyon image: "That was before their tanks / came." As in "Passing Remark" Zayyad underscores the impersonal and destructive nature of the "them," the unnamed enemy.

"Here We Will Stay"
translated by Sharif Elmusa and Charles Doria

Significant Passage, lines 16-19:

Here we shall stay,
sing our songs,
take to the angry streets,
fill prisons with dignity.

The first and last stanzas of this four-stanza poem begin with the couplet "In Lidda, in Ramla, in the Galilee, / we shall remain." The verb "shall" represents a position of determination and strength in the face of the conqueror.

The towns of Lidda and Ramla are southeast of Jerusalem. Ramla was the Palestinian capital in the 8th and 9th centuries and the Mamluk capital in the 14th century. Lidda was also a major Muslim settlement. In July 1948, both towns were attacked and the Muslim residents were forced out. Palestinians view the attacks on both of these towns as ethnic cleansing. Both Lidda (now Lod) and Ramla have been resettled with Jewish immigrants though each maintains a small Muslim population. The region of the Galilee has also witnessed conflict between Palestinian and Israeli forces. The city of Nazareth (known in Arabic as An-Nasra and the town where Zayyad served as mayor) is among the largest Muslim towns in Israel.

As stated in the title, Zayyad communicates the Palestinian steadfastness in maintaining their homes despite Israeli occupation. All three areas, Lidda, Ramla and the Galilee obviously represent areas where there has been intense conflict because Palestinians have lived in these areas for centuries. These towns establish the conquerer-conquered relationship of the Israelis and Palestinians throughout the poem. Because of the Israeli power position, the Palestinians harbor resentment for the difficulties they are suffering yet they are determined to overcome the Israelis in the future. Zayyad illustrates the empowered and disempowered relations in the second stanza where he describes the Palestinians serving Israelis by working in "your restaurants" and "your bars." The Palestinians work hard to "snatch a bit for our children." They "fill prisons" in stanza four but they fill them "with dignity." Even in their state of confinement, they will maintain their honor.

The "us" versus "them" dichotomy runs strongly throughout the poem. The Palestinians are strong and dignified while the Israelis are monstrous. The Palestinians continue to "sing our songs" and to "take to the angry streets." They persist in their protest. Their resistance is also to purposely cause irritation to a powerful, engulfing beast. They are determined to be an obstruction to the conqueror, "like a wall," not only to keep Israelis out but also to figuratively press down upon the Israeli people, slowly squeezing the life out of them. The metaphor of irritation and pain is furthered by the desire to be a tearing of the throat "like a shard of glass" or "a cactus thorn." The Palestinians will keep the Israelis from engulfing or swallowing them easily.

The "eater" (Israelis) and "eaten" (Palestinians) metaphors continue into the last stanza. The resistance of the Palestinians is calm and productive. They will continue to "guard the shade of the fig / and olive trees," to maintain their quiet and dignity as well as the fruits of their existence. Meanwhile, the future of the people lies in their children who, like dough, will eventually rise, fermented by the rebellion of their parents.

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